

Sermon Outline
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church
“Reconcile with God, then we can reconcile with other people”
(Part II of “Our Ministry of Reconciliation”)
February 8, 2025

Scripture

Genesis 33:1-17
Proverbs 15:1
Matthew 22:37-40

Core Idea and purpose

Core theological ideas from earlier sermons in the series:

- (02/01/2026) We encourage people to wrestle with God so they can come to Jesus and be reconciled with God

Core theological idea: Reconciliation with God gives us peace and this peace empowers us to reconcile with others.

Challenge/purpose: To exhort the congregants to seek reconciliation – to repent when they need to repent and forgive when they need to forgive

The Sermon

Our Savior and Lord, Jesus the Christ, summarizes God’s law with love. He said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets”

There is a direct relationship between loving God and loving our neighbors as we love ourselves. The more we love God, the more we will love our neighbors as we love ourselves AND the more we love our neighbors as we love ourselves, the more we will love God. It’s a wonderfully awesome cycle. We must stay on this cycle!

There’s a similar relationship between reconciliation with God and reconciliation with other people. Reconciliation with God gives us peace and this peace empowers us to reconcile with others. Last Sunday we learned how we can wrestle with God so we can reconcile with God. So, today we learn about reconciliation with other people. If we are serious about loving our neighbors as we love ourselves, we will want to do our part to have reconciliation with other people. Now, I say it again: Reconciliation with God gives us peace and this peace empowers us to reconcile with others.

Jacob discovered this to be true. Last Sunday, we learned that Jacob wrestled with God. Because of this wrestling match, Jacob got to know God, surrendered

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to God’s loving authority, and became a new creation. In other words, Jacob became reconciled with God. This reconciliation gave Jacob peace, and this peace empowered him to reconcile himself with his brother Esau.

Remember, when Jacob left home, his brother, Esau, wanted to murder him. Now that he and his large family was returning home, Jacob didn’t know if his brother still wanted to kill him. He knew he would need to try some sort of reconciliation with Esau, but he was unsure of his ability to bring about reconciliation. However, because of his wrestling match with God, Jacob became a new man and better equipped to try reconciliation.

While traveling home with his family, Jacob stood on high ground, looked out and saw, way in the distance, his brother, Esau, with 400 men coming towards him. Fear probably pierced his heart as he imagined Esau coming with 400 men to start a fight. Jacob hastily organized his family to meet Esau’s force and then went ahead of his family to face Esau alone. Facing Esau without any of his men to back him up was a risky thing to do. Reconciliation requires risk.

While still far off but close enough for Esau to see, Jacob showed humility and bowed down to Esau. He understood Proverbs 15:1, “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” This act of humility made the tense situation a bit calmer.

Esau reacted to Jacob’s act of humility by running to him, throwing his arms around his neck, and kissing him. They both wept while embracing each other. They had reconciled with each other.

There are two things that must happen for reconciliation to occur. The person who needs to repent must repent and the person who needs to forgive, must forgive. In today’s Bible story, Jacob repented of his conniving, deceitful ways after he wrestled with God and Esau forgave Jacob sometime before they reunited.

We see the same thing happening in our relationship with God. We repent of our sins and God forgives us of our sins. While dying on the cross, Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Jesus was talking with His Father about forgiving the religious leaders, Pontus Pilate, and the soldiers who were crucifying Him. Here’s the important thing to understand: God decided to forgive them before they realized they were sinning and needed to repent. This shows us that God offers us forgiveness before we even know we need it. All we have to do is accept God’s forgiveness with repentance. Jacob did that after wrestling with God.

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It’s easy to read these Bible stories and think, “This may happen in the Bible, but it doesn’t happen in real life.” Well, that is wrong thinking. This type of reconciliation happens in real life because God is lovingly present in the world. God’s grace empowers us to reconcile with each other.

I invite you to visit the Reader’s Digest page at www.rd.com/list/inspiring-forgiveness-stories/. You will find 10 real life examples of reconciliation – where the people who need to repent, repent and the people who need to forgive, forgive. I will share three of the ten examples with you right now.

Example 1: The understanding widower After a long shift at the fire department, Matt Swatzell fell asleep while driving and crashed into another vehicle, taking the life of pregnant mother June Fitzgerald and injuring her 19-month-old daughter. Fitzgerald’s husband, a full-time pastor, asked for the man’s diminished sentence—and began meeting with Swatzell for coffee and conversation. Many years later, the two men remain close. “You forgive as you’ve been forgiven,” Fitzgerald said, referencing the Bible. So, Matt repented and Fitzgerald forgave, thus producing reconciliation.

Example 2: The unwavering mother Teenager Jordyn Howe took his stepfather’s gun to school and accidentally shot Ady Guzman-Jesus’s daughter, Lourdes, while showing the firearm to friends. Astonishing the judge and the community, the victim’s mother, Guzman-Jesus, not only forgave the boy but also asked for him to get a lighter sentence, telling reporters that she believes her daughter would have wanted it that way. Howe served one year in a juvenile detention center and visited local schools with Guzman-Jesus warning kids of the dangers of guns. So, Jordyn Howe repented and Guzman-Jesus forgave, thus producing reconciliation.

Example 3: The unlikely pardoner Iranian Samereh Alinejad wanted revenge after her teenage son was murdered in a street fight. But in a dramatic turn at the gallows, literally moments before the killer was to be executed, Alinejad made a last-minute decision to pardon the man. She explained later that her son had come to her in a dream and asked her not to take revenge. Photos of Alinejad hugging the mother of her son’s murderer made international news. Years later, this incredible story of forgiveness continues to inspire.

In this story, we do not know if the murderer repented. We can only do our part to bring about reconciliation. We cannot force the other person to do his/her part. However, Samereh Alinejad’s forgiveness did bring her into a loving relationship with the mother of her son’s murderer.

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All these stories of reconciliation were possible because of God’s grace. It is God’s love permeating the world that enables us to forgive when we need to forgiven and repent when we need to repent....Let’s pray.

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Sermon Outline

- I. Our Savior and Lord, Jesus the Christ, summarizes the God’s law with love.
 - A. He said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets”
 - B. There is a direct relationship between loving God and loving our neighbors as we love ourselves.
 - The more we love God, the more we will love our neighbors as we love ourselves AND the more we love our neighbors as we love ourselves, the more we will love God.
 - It’s a wonderfully awesome cycle.
 - We must stay on this cycle!
- II. There’s a similar relationship between reconciliation with God and reconciliation with other people.
 - A. Reconciliation with God gives us peace and this peace empowers us to reconcile with others.
 - B. Last Sunday we learned how we can wrestle with God so we can reconcile with God.
 - C. So, today we learn about reconciliation with other people.
 - If we are serious about loving our neighbors as we love ourselves, we will want to do our part to have reconciliation with other people.
 - Remember, Reconciliation with God gives us peace and this peace empowers us to reconcile with others.
- III. Jacob discovered this to be true.
 - A. Last Sunday, we learned that Jacob wrestled with God.
 - Because of this wrestling match...
 - Jacob got to know God,

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- surrendered to God’s loving authority,
 - and became a new creation.
 - In other words, Jacob became reconciled with God.
 - This reconciliation gave Jacob peace, and this peace empowered him to reconcile himself with his brother Esau.
- B. Remember, when Jacob left home, his brother, Esau, wanted to murder him.
- Now that he and his large family was returning home, Jacob didn’t know if his brother still wanted to kill him.
 - Jacob knew he would need to try some sort of reconciliation with Esau.
 - Because of his wrestling match with God, Jacob was a new man and better equipped to try reconciliation.
- C. While traveling home with his family, Jacob stood on high ground, looked out and saw, way in the distance, his brother, Esau, with 400 men coming towards him.
- Fear probably pierced his heart as he imagined Esau might be coming with 400 men to fight his men.
 - Jacob hastily organized his family to meet Esau’s force and then went ahead of his family to face Esau alone.
- D. While still far off but close enough for Esau to see, Jacob showed humility and bowed down to Esau.
- He understood Proverbs 15:1, “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”
 - This act of humility made the tense situation a bit calmer.
- E. Esau reacted to Jacob’s act of humility by running to him, throwing his arms around his neck, and kissing him.
- They both wept while embracing each other.

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- They had reconciled with each other.

IV. There are two things that must happen for reconciliation to occur.

A. The person who needs to repent must repent and the person who needs to forgive, must forgive.

- In today’s Bible story, Jacob repented of his conniving, deceitful heart after his wrestling match with God and Esau forgave Jacob sometime before they reunited.

B. We see the same thing happening in our relationship with God.

- We repent of our sins and God forgives us of our sins.
- While dying on the cross, Jesus says, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”
 - Jesus was talking with His Father about forgiving the religious leaders, Pontus Pilate, and the soldiers who were crucifying Him.
 - Here’s the important thing to understand: God decided to forgive them before they ever realized they were sinning and needed to repent.
 - This shows us that God offers us forgiveness before we even know we need it.
 - All we have to do is accept God’s forgiveness with repentance.
 - Jacob did that at the end of his wrestling match with God.

V. It’s easy to read these Bible stories and think, “This may have happened in the Bible story but it doesn’t happen in real life.”

A. Well, that is wrong thinking.

- This type of reconciliation happens in real life because God is lovingly present in the world.
- God’s grace empowers us to reconcile with each other.

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B. I invite you to visit the Reader’s Digest page at www.rd.com/list/inspiring-forgiveness-stories/.

- You will find 10 real life examples of reconciliation – where the people who need to repent, repent and the people who need to forgive, forgive.
- I will share three of the ten examples with you right now.

C. Example 1: **The understanding widower**

- After a long shift at the fire department, Matt Swatzell fell asleep while driving and crashed into another vehicle, taking the life of pregnant mother June Fitzgerald and injuring her 19-month-old daughter.
- Fitzgerald’s husband, a full-time pastor, asked for the man’s diminished sentence—and began meeting with Swatzell for coffee and conversation.
- Many years later, the two men remain close.
- “You forgive as you’ve been forgiven,” Fitzgerald said, referencing the Bible.
- So, Matt repented and Fitzgerald forgave, thus producing reconciliation.

D. Example 2: **The unwavering mother**

- Teenager Jordyn Howe took his stepfather’s gun to school and accidentally shot Ady Guzman-Jesus’s daughter, Lourdes, while showing the firearm to friends.
- Astonishing the judge and the community, the victim’s mother, Guzman-Jesus, not only forgave the boy but also asked for him to get a lighter sentence, telling reporters that she believes her daughter would have wanted it that way.

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- Howe served one year in a juvenile detention center and visited local schools with Guzman-Jesus warning kids of the dangers of guns.
- So, Jordyn Howe repented and Guzman-Jesus forgave, thus producing reconciliation.

E. Example 3: **The unlikely pardoner**

- Iranian Samereh Alinejad wanted revenge after her teenage son was murdered in a street fight.
- But in a dramatic turn at the gallows, literally moments before the killer was to be executed, Alinejad made a last-minute decision to pardon the man.
- She explained later that her son had come to her in a dream and asked her not to take revenge.
- Photos of Alinejad hugging the mother of her son’s murderer made international news.
- Years later, this incredible story of forgiveness continues to inspire.
- In this story, we do not know if the murderer repented.
 - We can only do our part to bring about reconciliation. We cannot force the other person to do his/her part.
 - However, Samereh Alinejad’s forgiveness did bring her into a loving relationship with the mother of her son’s murderer.

F. All these stories of reconciliation were possible because of God’s grace.

- It is God’s love permeating the world that enables us to forgive when we need to be forgiven and repent when we need to repent....Let’s pray.